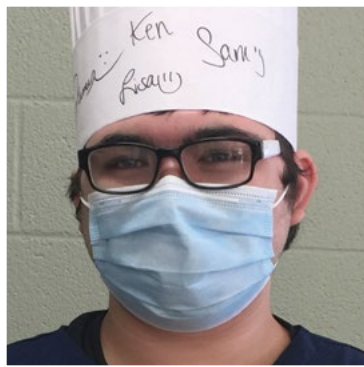


MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Mission Statement	3
Letter from the Chair	4
State Rehabilitation Council	5
Council's Purpose	6

MISSOURI VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Vision, Mission and Principles	7
Letter to the Governor	8
Highlights	9
Agency Overview	10

MAJOR TOPICS

Partnering	13
Services	15
Success Stories: Joshua Fish	18
Success Stories: Khamen Merriweather	19
Success Stories: Jeff Gould	20

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Satisfaction Survey	21
Program Data	23
Offices	25
VR100: A Century of Success	26

Note: This annual report for calendar year 2020 covers information and data from Program Year 2019 (July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020).



Photo of the Missouri State Capitol provided by Jim Bowen.

MISSION STATEMENT

MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

OUR VISION

The Missouri State Rehabilitation Council envisions a society that values all of its members equally and provides opportunities so that all people are able to meet their needs, fulfill their dreams and participate in society.

OUR MISSION

To ensure that persons with disabilities have opportunities to be as productive as possible by advising Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation that services provided to persons with disabilities are:

- of the highest quality.
- consumer directed.
- responsive to consumer choice.
- effective.
- individualized.
- culturally specific and relevant to labor market trends.

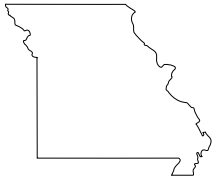
OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To work in partnership with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation to achieve positive outcomes for persons with disabilities by:

- providing input on the state plan, policies and practices affecting services to persons with disabilities.
- obtaining and interpreting consumer input.
- identifying corrective action consistent with that input.
- advocating for adequate resources to ensure that the rehabilitation needs of all Missourians are met.
- identifying strategies to address the needs of people who are not being served or who are being underserved.
- supporting VR in complying with laws applicable to persons with disabilities.

(Adopted Nov. 4, 1999)

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



MISSOURI STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

3024 Dupont Circle ■ Jefferson City, Missouri 65109
Phone: 573-751-3251 ■ Fax: 573-751-1441

Bob Hosutt, Nixa
Chairperson

Lori Pace, Rogersville
Vice Chairperson

Earl Brown, Salem

Daniel Cayou, Jefferson City

Diana Eakright, Independence

Karen Gridley, Kansas City

Judy Heard, Kansas City

Debby Loveall-Stewart, Joplin

Lydia Mitchell, Florissant

Gary Otten, St. Louis

Mary Stodden, St. Charles

Tim Tadlock, Gallatin

Yvonne Wright, New Bloomfield

Timothy E. Gaines, Jefferson City
Ex Officio Member
VR Assistant Commissioner

December 30, 2020

The Honorable Michael L. Parson
Governor of Missouri
State Capitol
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

On behalf of the members of the Missouri State Rehabilitation Council, I am proud to present the Council's annual report for 2020. In these pages, you will find the progress made by Missouri citizens who were served by vocational rehabilitation programs.

Each Council member has unique experiences in advocating for the rights of our fellow Missourians whose physical or mental disabilities may pose barriers to productive employment. Through our quarterly meetings and committee deliberations, we have given our support to Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation to empower individuals with disabilities and to encourage decisions that lead to greater self-sufficiency.

We have advised Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation on innovative programming to reach the underserved populations in the state and on exploring additional methods of obtaining feedback on services provided.

It has been my great privilege to work with members of the Council as well as with Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation staff, all of whom are dedicated to providing our citizens with the opportunity to make choices in obtaining meaningful employment. Employment is a key to independence.

Respectfully,

Bob Hosutt
Chairperson

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON



BOB HOSUTT
Nixa

VICE CHAIRPERSON



LORI PACE
Rogersville

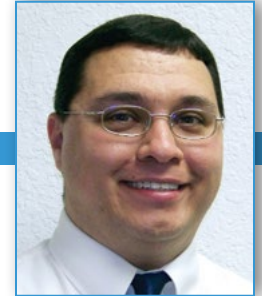
EX OFFICIO MEMBER



TIMOTHY E. GAINES
Jefferson City



EARL BROWN
Salem



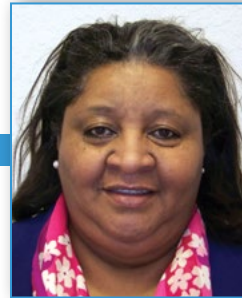
DANIEL CAYOU
Jefferson City



DIANA EAKRIGHT
Independence



KAREN GRIDLEY
Kansas City



JUDY HEARD
Kansas City



DEBBY LOVEALL-STEWART
Joplin



LYDIA MITCHELL
Florissant



GARY OTTEN
St. Louis



MARY STODDEN
St. Charles



TIM TADLOCK
Gallatin



YVONNE WRIGHT
New Bloomfield

COUNCIL'S PURPOSE

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was first authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1998 (referred to hereafter as the Act). Section 105 of the Act requires the state vocational rehabilitation agency to establish a council.

The SRC was initially formed on June 1, 1993. Members are appointed by the governor and serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms. As required by the Act, SRC members represent the Statewide Independent Living Council; the Parent Training and Information Center; the Client Assistance Program; the Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program; the Office of Special Education, which is the state agency responsible for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; the Missouri Workforce Development Board; community rehabilitation program service providers; disability advocacy groups; current or former applicants/recipients of vocational rehabilitation services; and business, industry and labor.

The SRC is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and advising VR regarding its performance on such issues as eligibility; the extent, scope and effectiveness of services; and any other functions affecting people with disabilities. Full SRC meetings are held quarterly on the first Thursday of February, May, August and November. Subcommittees meet as needed throughout the year.

During 2020, the SRC was actively involved with VR in the activities below:

Reviewed and provided recommendations to VR regarding the combined state plan's comprehensive statewide needs assessment, goals, priorities, performance accountability measures and comprehensive system of personnel development

Reviewed hearing decisions and mediation outcomes

Provided recommendations to VR on policy revisions and rule changes

Attended and participated in VR public hearings to provide input on the combined state plan

Provided comments to VR regarding issues pertaining to waiting lists (Order of Selection)

Evaluated and provided recommendations on the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and satisfaction with those services

Assisted VR staff in preparing the SRC's annual report for the governor and the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of vocational rehabilitation services in Missouri

Reviewed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and new regulations pertaining to Title IV

Coordinated and participated in presentations and activities with other councils and agencies including the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Client Assistance Program, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Department of Mental Health, the Parent Training and Information Center, Missouri Assistive Technology, the Hearing Loss Association, the Governor's Council on Disability, the Office of Workforce Development, and the Office of Special Education

VISION, MISSION AND PRINCIPLES

MISSOURI VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

VISION

Transforming lives through a great VR experience for everyone

MISSION

Empowering people with disabilities through employment

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

We will:

- Act with a sense of urgency.
- Provide quality customer service.
- Maximize our resources.
- Do the right thing.
- Put people first.
- Continuously evaluate our practices/processes.



LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR



Office of Adult Learning and
Rehabilitation Services

Timothy E. Gaines
Assistant Commissioner

3024 Dupont Circle • Jefferson City, MO 65109 • dese.mo.gov

December 30, 2020

The Honorable Michael L. Parson
Governor of Missouri
State Capitol
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Dear Governor Parson:

The annual report presented to you from the Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for 2020 provides information on the Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation employment program for individuals with disabilities.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation has operated under an Order of Selection since October 2003 due to the number of applicants requesting services, rising service costs and limited federal funding. The Rehabilitation Act requires eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities to receive services first. All other eligible individuals receive services as funds become available.

During Program Year 2019, Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation helped 4,396 individuals reach successful employment outcomes with a success rate of 55.4 percent for individuals who received services and exited the program.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation works closely with school districts across the state. The program annually provides transition services, including pre-employment transition services, to approximately 9,000 high school students and youth with disabilities.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation grant dollars expended for purchased client services from community vendors are effective and help local economies. In addition, the total annual increase in earnings for individuals with successful outcomes was over \$62 million. The program's customer satisfaction survey results are consistently among the top in the nation.

In closing, the Council and I offer our sincere appreciation for your personal interest and support in serving people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy E. Gaines". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Timothy E. Gaines
Assistant Commissioner, Office of Adult Learning and Rehabilitation Services

HIGHLIGHTS



25,408

individuals worked
with VR counselors.



526

successfully employed individuals
received Individual Placement
and Support services.



4,396

individuals achieved successful
employment outcomes.



99%

of successfully employed individuals
had significant disabilities.



1,756

youths reached successful
employment outcomes.



\$62,862,800

was the total annual increase
in earnings for individuals
with successful outcomes.



1,359

successfully employed
individuals received supported
employment services.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Prepared on behalf of the SRC, this annual report highlights various programs and services of VR during Program Year (PY) 2019 from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020. With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, VR services will now be reported on a federal program year rather than a federal fiscal year.

This past year has been both challenging and enlightening as the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way individuals interact and the way services are provided. In March, state agencies (including VR) were closed to the public in response to the pandemic. VR met challenges that the coronavirus created by providing services remotely, and staff developed new ways to serve individuals with disabilities. Using video platforms for conferencing, customer contact, meetings and trainings ensured the continuation of quality services. The SRC also began conducting its meetings virtually. Gradually, offices began to reopen for in-person services while still offering virtual options. During these unprecedented times, VR has developed flexible strategies to carry out its mission of empowering people with disabilities through employment.

On Oct. 1, 2003, due to insufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals, VR began operating under an Order of Selection with three priority categories. Eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are required by law to receive services first (Category 1). Eligible individuals who have less significant disabilities are required to be placed on a waiting list for services (Categories 2 and 3).

During PY 2019, VR counselors worked with more than 25,000 individuals in various categories and helped 4,396 individuals reach a successful employment outcome. On an average daily basis, VR served more than 14,000 individuals.

In PY 2019, 55.4 percent of individuals who received services through VR were successfully employed. This statistic is a percentage of all eligible individuals leaving VR who received services.

STATE FUNDING AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

VR receives state funding from the general revenue fund, the Missouri Lottery and the Department of Mental Health. The match requirement is 21.3 percent state funding and 78.7 percent federal funding.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) reimburses state vocational rehabilitation agencies for the costs of providing services to assist SSA disability recipients in becoming gainfully employed. Ticket Tracker software is used to interface with VR's case-management system. The software matches and identifies individuals receiving SSA disability benefits whom VR helped in reaching their employment goals. Ticket Tracker has streamlined the consumer identification and reimbursement submission process, enabling VR to receive SSA reimbursements in a more timely and efficient manner. In PY 2019, VR received \$3,210,351 in reimbursement claims. A portion of this funding helps support the Centers for Independent Living in Missouri.



Bob Hosutt, SRC chair, used virtual conferencing tools to communicate with his fellow council members this past year. All SRC meetings in 2020 were conducted virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic.



Billy Franko participated in Job Point's highway/heavy construction training program with VR's assistance. Franko has received his OSHA safety certification and flagger certification, and he is interning currently with the City of Columbia.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into federal law in 2014 to strengthen the workforce development system by aligning and improving employment, training and education programs. WIOA makes changes to programs authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, especially the VR program. Areas in which this legislation affects the program include employment for individuals with disabilities, employer relationships, services for youth and students with disabilities, and collaboration with other federal and state agencies and partners.

With regard to VR, the law focuses on providing services to individuals with disabilities, including youth and students with disabilities, to assist them in achieving competitive, integrated employment. VR continues to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain employment. VR is committed to developing new relationships with employers and providing flexible strategies like on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships and customized employment. VR has worked with other agencies to create a combined state plan that describes how VR and its partners will collaboratively deliver integrated services to Missouri's job seekers, workers and employers under WIOA.

COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

VR and the SRC jointly conduct an annual comprehensive statewide assessment of the rehabilitation needs of Missourians. The conclusions and recommendations of the assessment are incorporated into VR's goals and priorities for the purpose of improving services.

VR uses many methods to collect information for the assessment including customer satisfaction surveys, public hearings, VR strategic teams, SRC input, VR case data and national census statistics.

Two areas that the assessment specifically focuses on are the needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals from populations that have been traditionally unserved or underserved by vocational rehabilitation programs. The PY 2019 needs assessment identified the minority populations of Hispanics and African-Americans, along with individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI), and justice and foster care involved students with disabilities, as underserved. Figure 1 (page 12) reflects the closure percentages by ethnicity for PY 2019.

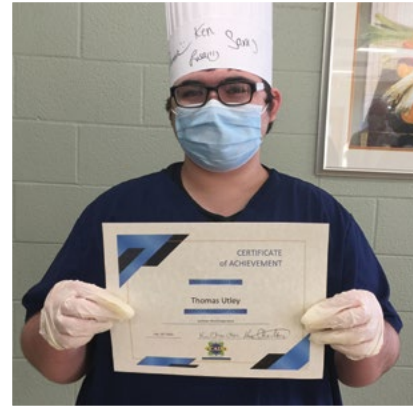
VR remains committed to improving services for underserved populations, increasing their employment outcomes and reducing the number of individuals from these populations who drop out prior to receiving services.



Dalon Brice Jr., a student at Hazelwood West High School, worked at Schnucks in Florissant in a summer work experience program. VR partnered with Schnucks and UCP Heartland to offer the program.



Hawken Weitzeil (left) and **Alex Putman** (right) participated in the Work Able Missouri apprenticeship program at Dogwood Canyon Nature Park in Lampe.



Thomas Utley, a student at Bowling Green High School, worked at Pike County Memorial Hospital in a summer work experience program and was offered a job after the program concluded. VR partnered with the hospital and the Pike County Agency for Developmental Disabilities.

VR utilizes the following strategies to address these areas of need:

- A part-time diversity consultant is employed to assist with improving services to underserved areas, developing training programs and establishing outreach strategies for individuals from diverse cultures.
- The Cultural Diversity Team (composed of the diversity consultant, VR management and district office staff) meets throughout the year to develop strategies for serving individuals from diverse cultures.
- Employees are provided with training opportunities on cultural competency that cover aspects of diversity.
- An autism services liaison has been appointed to serve as a resource for staff throughout the state. This liaison works with providers on strategies for better serving individuals with ASD.
- Employment Services Plus has been developed. This program is designed to assist individuals with ASD, TBI or deafness/hearing loss who require additional supports to reach successful employment outcomes.
- Two pilot projects have been developed to provide the pre-employment transition service of peer mentoring to students with disabilities involved in the justice and foster care systems.

The assessment also addresses the necessities of youth and students with disabilities including their need for pre-employment or other transition services. Another of VR's goals is to increase the number of employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. For strategy information on this area of need, see page 15.

CLOSURE PERCENTAGES BY ETHNICITY: PY 2019

STATUS	WHITE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN	OTHER
4,396 successful employment outcomes	75%	20%	5%
3,542 closed unsuccessfully after services	72%	23%	5%
3,982 closed after eligibility before services	72%	22%	6%

Figure 1

PARTNERING

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT PARTNERS

WIOA requires the alignment of core programs in order to provide coordinated and streamlined services. These core programs are VR; Rehabilitation Services for the Blind; Adult Education and Literacy; Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth; and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a combined partner.) Teams composed of representatives from WIOA core partner programs, as well as other partner organizations, have been formed to develop strategies for serving mutual clients. These teams have identified focus areas, such as best practices and agency cross-trainings, that can be shared statewide and at the local level. All program partners strive to improve the workforce system and services to job seekers, employees and employers.

VR collaborates, coordinates and cooperates with partner programs to ensure that individuals with disabilities benefit from seamless access to career services, education and training. VR also participates in business services teams within the workforce system to better serve employers' needs. VR offers a dual-customer approach by supporting its job candidates and businesses in order to achieve successful outcomes for both.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are community-based nonresidential programs designed to promote independent living for people with disabilities. In Missouri, there are 22 CILs that offer independent living services. The CILs are funded through federal and state independent living grants and are managed by local boards composed of individuals with disabilities who have been successful in establishing their own independent lifestyles. VR and the CILs work together on a regular basis to share referrals and provide services to mutual clientele. A number of CILs have VR district office staff as active board members. VR and the CILs have developed a summer work experience program to provide pre-employment transition services. The CILs offer students who are potentially eligible for VR services access to job exploration activities, workplace-readiness training, social support and instruction on self-advocacy (including peer mentoring). Last summer, nine CILs were involved in the program and worked with nine students.

MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS

VR participates in the Missouri Reentry Process, which encourages collaboration among government and local agencies to improve the transition of offenders leaving prison and returning to local communities and work. State government agencies are the Departments of Corrections, Economic Development, Elementary and Secondary Education, Health and Senior Services, Mental Health, Public Safety, Revenue, Social Services, Transportation, and the Office of the State Courts Administrator. Other partnering agencies include the federal probation system along with local law enforcement, faith-based organizations, service providers and treatment programs.



Joey McCarty, a student at Jefferson High School in Festus, worked at his local Goodwill retail store in a summer work experience program. McCarty was presented with a gift card in appreciation of his honesty for turning over money he found in the store to management.

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

The Department of Mental Health's (DMH) Divisions of Behavioral Health (DBH) and Developmental Disabilities (DD) have been longstanding partners with VR in assisting eligible individuals seeking vocational rehabilitation services in order to gain employment. Partnership activities include the funding of DB101, a customized Missouri benefits-planning website. Cross-system collaboration remains ongoing through system change initiatives, grant and technical support opportunities, and local/regional trainings. VR has appointed a DMH liaison, and DMH has representation on WIOA teams consisting of combined partner programs and other partner agencies.

In partnership with DBH, Individual Placement and Support (IPS), an evidence-based supported employment service for adults with mental illness, has been a focus. IPS requires close program and clinical relationships between local mental health and vocational rehabilitation staff to ensure success.

VR also is partnering with DD and other agencies to provide a customized employment program that promotes the specific abilities of individuals with disabilities in order to meet employers' needs.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST STATE LEADERSHIP MENTORING PROGRAM

Gov. Michael Parson is supportive of fully integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce. Missouri has been designated a Model Employer state and has been participating (with 10 other states) in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program. This program assists the state in reaching its goal of hiring more individuals with disabilities. This past year, Missouri received assistance with its Model Employer implementation and worked with other states and national experts to create the capacity necessary to improve employment opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities. Representatives from the governor's office; VR; Paraquad, a community rehabilitation services provider; Office of Administration; DMH DBH-DD; Department of Social Services; Office of Workforce Development; Governor's Council on Disability; Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council; and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry have participated in this program.

COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

VR and community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) collaboratively work with an outcome-based service model that emphasizes quality employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. CRPs are nonprofit organizations accredited by recognized professional associations that have developed commonly accepted processes for evaluating employment-related services. All independently owned and operated, CRPs provide services that may include vocational planning, job development and placement services, skills training, specialized employment services, supported employment, and transition services.

Multiple ad hoc teams composed of VR and CRP staff have worked together to develop and design new processes. VR and its CRP partners have implemented several projects to improve services. During summer 2020, a six-week work experience program for students with disabilities was held. Thirty-four CRPs, 697 VR-eligible students and 209 schools participated at 207 employment sites. Collaboration and partnership are cornerstones of the relationship between VR and CRPs and have fostered an environment of creativity and innovation. The VR-CRP steering committee meets regularly to review progress on their organizations' joint projects and on service delivery.



Morgan Stockman (left), a student at Blair Oaks High School, and **Torrie Hammond** (right), a student at Camdenton High School, worked at Share the Harvest Food Pantry in Camdenton in a summer work experience program.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Disability Categories of Those Served: PY 2019

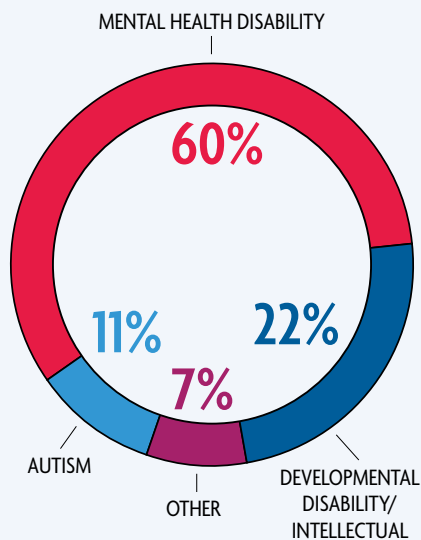


Figure 2

TRANSITION SERVICES

WIOA places a significant emphasis on services to youth and students. The law's intent is to ensure that young individuals with disabilities are better prepared and have more opportunities for competitive, integrated employment. WIOA requires that VR (in collaboration with local education agencies) provide pre-employment transition services to eligible or potentially eligible students ages 16 to 21. These services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs, workplace-readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy (including peer mentoring).

VR has helped to develop and implement innovative programs to provide pre-employment transition services. VR also has established partnerships with the University of Missouri's College of Education, CILs, CRPs, businesses and local school districts. With its partners, VR is working to expand pre-employment transition services to all parts of the state.

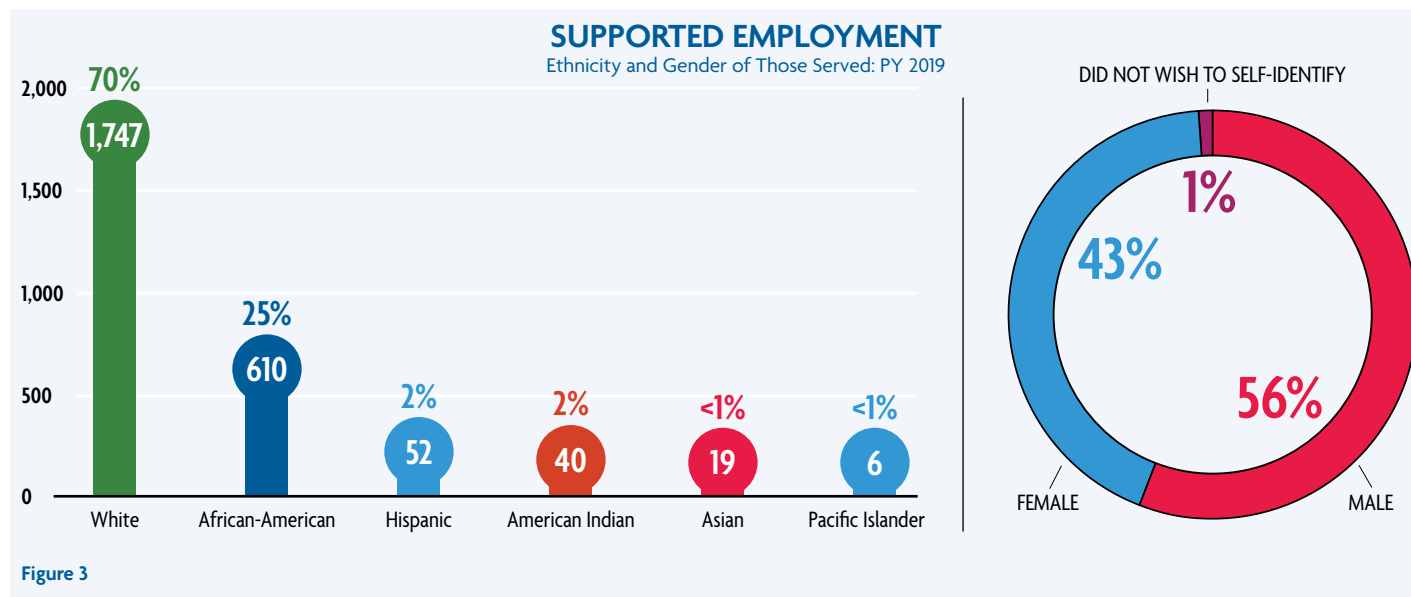
VR provides youth with disabilities ages 14 to 24 a variety of other transition services such as job placement, supported employment, training and rehabilitation technology. A team of professionals from VR, local school districts and other agencies has been assembled to offer support and technical assistance on these services.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

VR provides supported employment (SE) services to a diverse population as indicated by Figures 2-5 (pages 15-16). Some of these services are jointly provided by DMH DBH-DD. SE is defined as competitive work in an integrated work setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. During PY 2019, 55 percent of individuals who received SE services and exited the program were successfully employed.

In PY 2019, VR worked with 120 CRP locations that provide SE services and cover all counties in Missouri. An outcome-based model of SE services is used that features a period of discovery and exploration with the individual to develop vocational direction and community-based job exploration. Outcomes include job placement, 30 days of independent employment and 90 days of employment. In addition to these milestones, on-the-job and off-site supports may also be authorized.

VR places an emphasis on the development of natural support systems to help individuals participating in supported employment successfully remain in the workforce. These natural supports help to reduce the cost of providing SE services. Figure 5 (page 16) shows the average cost of services, hourly wages and other statistics for supported employment.



SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Age of Those Served: PY 2019

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Less than 25	773	31%
25-34	601	24%
35-44	473	19%
45-54	359	15%
55-64	236	10%
65 and over	32	1%
TOTAL	2,474	100%

Figure 4

OTHER SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS: PY 2019

Average cost of supported employment services per person	\$1,622
Average hourly wage per person	\$9.97
Average hours per week worked per person	24
Success rate	55%
Successful outcomes	1,359
Total participants	2,474

Figure 5

Note: All information in figures 2-5 applies to SE services only. Statistics are based on the number of individuals who exited the program either successfully or unsuccessfully after receiving SE services.

REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY

In PY 2019, VR provided a variety of rehabilitation technology services, assistive devices and equipment to 829 individuals who received services and exited the program for a total cost of \$6,488,600. VR purchases assistive devices to help with increasing, maintaining or improving functional capabilities. Devices could include hearing aids and other personal listening and communication devices, vehicle and home modifications, wheelchairs, and other powered mobility equipment. Rehabilitation technology services include consultation, evaluation, design, customization, adaptation, maintenance, repair, therapy and technical training.

VR and Missouri Assistive Technology (MoAT) have collaborated to develop a cooperative agreement to ensure the maximum statewide utilization of services. The agreement provides a plan for service coordination; for using resources to the best advantage; for information sharing, technical support and training; to facilitate the referral of potentially eligible individuals between agencies; and to help eligible people obtain rehabilitation technology services. A VR staff member is a representative on the MoAT Advisory Council.

Several VR counselors have specialized caseloads in the area of rehabilitation technology. Located throughout Missouri are seven VR counselors and one assistant director who are skilled in manual communication for the deaf and hard of hearing. Also, designated hard of hearing specialists in the Kansas City area are acquiring additional education on hearing aids and rehabilitation technology for individuals with hearing loss.

VR utilizes assistive technology demonstration sites located at CILs across the state for exploring, reviewing and demonstrating various devices, services and resources that are available to individuals with alternative communication needs. VR counselors are allowed to borrow rehabilitation technology equipment from MoAT for individuals to test before purchase.



BRITTANY WISEMAN

Brittany Wiseman credits VR and Assistant District Supervisor Kathleen McCoy with giving her “the gift of independence and freedom.”

“Kathleen and VR have been instrumental in my career,” Wiseman said, “modifying my home, vehicle and work area so I can continue to be successful at my job. I am beyond thankful.”

VR has assisted Wiseman with employment, home modification and vehicle modification to help her maintain her job and her independence. ■

JOSHUA FISH

Joshua Fish was sitting in the dining hall at Truman State University, waiting for someone to talk to him. Up until that point, everyone he had encountered at Truman had been welcoming and encouraging — so why hadn't the student sitting next to him, eating alone, done the same?

"I realized that he was feeling the same way I was feeling," Joshua said. "We were both feeling lonely in that moment, but then I thought, 'Why don't I try talking to him?' I did, and we're still friends to this day."

Joshua graduated from Truman in May with a bachelor's degree in design (with a focus in animation) and a minor in computer science. As a child, a love of Pixar movies and a birthday party themed around *Monsters, Inc.* started him on his current career path of storytelling through animation. As an adult, Joshua recognizes the powerful effect stories in animated films can have on both individual viewers and society as a whole.

"Stories are a good way to encourage people, not even as a call to action but just to make someone feel better about themselves or a situation they might be going through," he said. "They provide a path of relatability. People can see a different perspective on something they might be facing in their own life. A subtle change in perspective can change people's actions."

As a child, Joshua was diagnosed with arthrogryposis, which caused his joints to become contracted. He uses a wheelchair for mobility but is able to use his hands to operate the computer tools needed for design and animation.

Denise Mason, district supervisor at Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation's Chillicothe office, said Joshua began working with a VR counselor in high school as a transition student in Bethany, Missouri. While transition students often need assistance in choosing a career path to pursue, Joshua already had a good idea of what he wanted to do with his life. Mason took over handling Joshua's case after he was established at Truman. VR contributed financially to his room and board along with some tuition.

"He's very humble," she said. "He's open and talkative but humble and very easygoing. He has a very positive attitude."

Examples of Joshua's visual storytelling, along with a video he made commemorating his time as a Truman student. When people make positive comments on his videos, he uses that as another opportunity to reach out like he did back in the Truman dining hall.

"I'd like to make work that can reach a large audience," he said, "but more importantly, I'd like to create work that inspires people to create personal connections with others." ■



SUCCESS STORIES

KHAMEN MERRIWEATHER

Helping residents of a nursing home meet their daily needs might sound challenging and potentially frustrating to a lot of people. To Khamen Merriweather, it's actually the easiest job in the world.

"When I say it's the easiest job, you need to have a good heart and need to want to keep on doing it," he said. "A nursing home isn't just someone's last place — it should be their happiest place. If I sent my dad or mom or grandparents there, I know exactly how I'd want my people to be treated."

While working for Delmar Gardens in the St. Louis metro area, Khamen has taken residents' vital signs and fed them when they were unable to do so, though sometimes the assistance they need is simply a friendly ear when they're not having a good day.

"I like doing the best that I can so that everybody can feel heard," he said.

Kim Reed, a transition counselor II in the St. Louis West/Transition VR office, said Khamen was referred to VR while he was a student at Hazelwood West High School. He had been diagnosed with ADHD and a learning disability in reading comprehension. Khamen initially attended college after graduation but had to withdraw for financial reasons.

After he returned home, Reed helped Khamen get into an apprenticeship program to become a certified nursing assistant. VR paid for him to attend the program, and he was named valedictorian of his apprenticeship class.

"He's very smart and very motivated," Reed said. "Every time I talk to him, he's got some grand thing he's working on. He's very caring and really enjoys helping people."

In 2020, Khamen took a temporary job with the U.S. Census Bureau in clerical administration and human resources. When that job is finished, he plans to return to Delmar Gardens. He would like to become a registered nurse but also wants to return to college to eventually earn a graduate degree. While he'd long been interested in the medical profession, Khamen credits VR and his counselor with helping him make real progress toward his long-term goals.

"I had no idea what direction to go in, and she laid it out on the table for me," he said.

When asked how he would describe himself to someone who'd never met him, Khamen said he believes maintaining a positive attitude is the key to his success.

"Always be positive," he said. "Always be moving forward. Always work on being better." ■



SUCCESS STORIES

JEFF GOULD

Jeff Gould's doctor had given him an ultimatum — either find a new line of work or lose the ability to walk.

“Basically, over time my neck and back issues were such that my doctor told me, ‘If you don’t get out of (construction), you won’t walk in two years.’”

Those physical injuries that led to mobility limitations ended Jeff’s 26-year career in construction that began on the 42nd floor of a high-rise in downtown Chicago. But, with the help of VR, they led to a new career as a computer programmer for Phelps Health in Rolla.

Jeff had actually gone to school to study computers in the 1980s, but four years in the U.S. Marine Corps and the money he was making in construction kept him away from the field for more than two decades.

“I stayed up-to-date and current as much as I could, but unless you get a degree, you can’t do anything with it,” he said.

Miranda Lipscomb, a counselor III at the Springfield North VR office, said VR helped pay for housing, tuition and books for Jeff to attend the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla. She said Jeff was a dedicated student who kept her current on how he was doing and always sought advice when he needed help.

“He was a really neat guy to get to know,” she said. “Just a great client.”

“To be quite honest,” Jeff said, “Miranda deserves every bit of credit. She walked me through everything I needed to know and was always an email away. She’s the key to the whole thing as far as I’m concerned.”

While attending college, Jeff lived in Rolla during the week and then returned to Lebanon on weekends to be with his wife. When he secured his current job after his 2019 graduation, she moved to Rolla to join him and now works at Phelps as a lab technician. Living apart from his wife was difficult but something he’d previously experienced while working construction, when he might have to be on-site at a job for six months because “you have to go where the work is.”

Jeff’s focus as a programmer is on using medical records software and tailoring it for his hospital’s billing needs. The software allows the hospital to streamline customer billing “so (customers) don’t get 20 statements like they used to.” A self-described “computer nerd,” Jeff also is interested in eventually working in cybersecurity and computer networking, possibly for reasons related to his previous career.

“In some ways, you can secure a network like you can make a building secure so people can’t get in,” he said. ■



SATISFACTION SURVEY

Satisfaction with staff and services is a VR priority, and the SRC's Program Evaluation Committee continues to work with VR on reviewing and analyzing feedback from individuals who receive VR services. This feedback is shared with management, supervisors and counselors and is used as a tool to improve services, evaluate staff performance and determine training needs.

During PY 2019, survey letters and postage-paid envelopes were mailed to a random sample of 8,378 individuals at various stages in the rehabilitation process (with a response rate of 13 percent). Survey feedback was positive. Results showed that 98 percent of those surveyed felt they were treated with respect, 96 percent felt that staff was available when needed and 95 percent felt they knew the purpose of VR. The overall results are listed on page 22.

SURVEY COMMENTS

"Everyone I worked with was extremely helpful and kind. I would recommend your services to anyone in need."

"VR helped me feel valuable."

"I never dreamed that where I am today was possible."

"Even when everyone has given up on you, VR can help."

"My employment has helped fulfill my independent quality of life. The VR program gave me a great opportunity for success in my life."

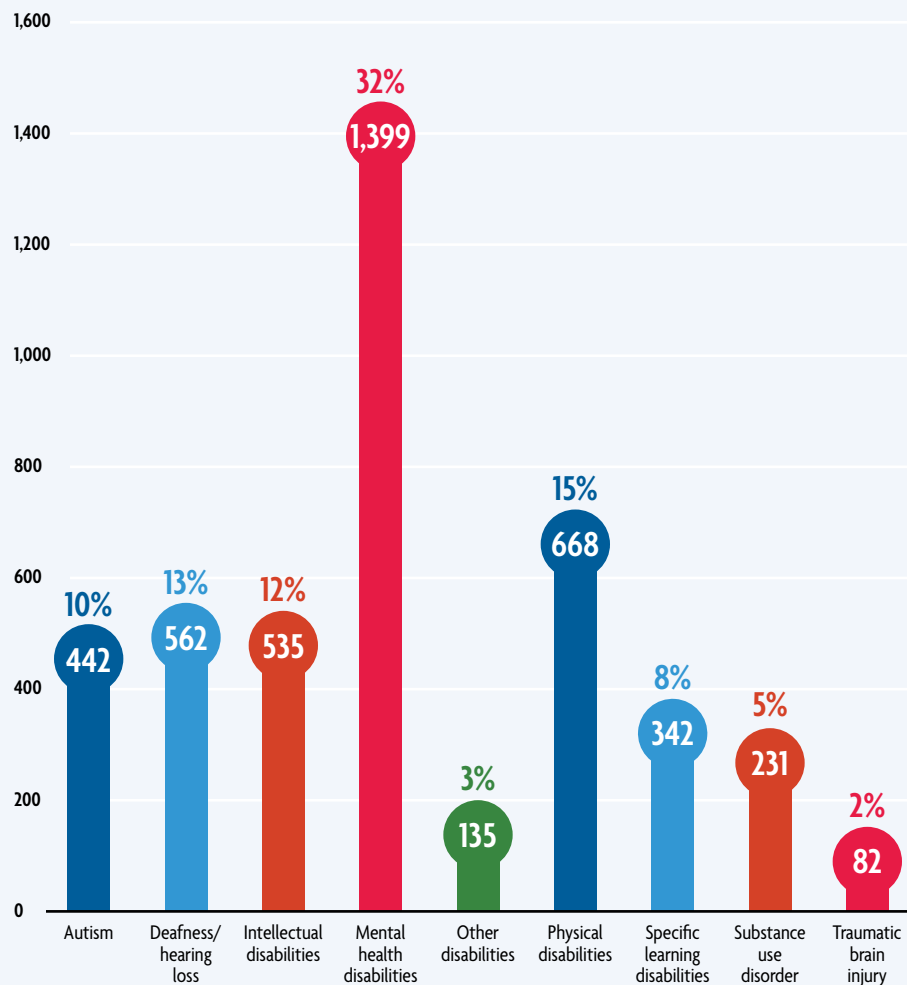
SATISFACTION SURVEY

SURVEY RESULTS (Specific group responses)	TOTAL RESPONSES RECEIVED	STAFF WAS AVAILABLE		STAFF TREATED ME WITH RESPECT		I KNEW PURPOSE OF VR SERVICES		COUNSELOR HELPED PLAN SERVICES		COUNSELOR EXPLAINED CHOICES	
		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Total responses	1,407	96%	4%	98%	2%	95%	5%	93%	7%	94%	6%
Open cases	631	98%	2%	99%	1%	95%	5%	94%	6%	96%	4%
Successful outcomes	556	99%	1%	99%	1%	97%	3%	97%	3%	96%	4%
Unsuccessful outcomes; closed before services	61	84%	16%	95%	5%	83%	17%	72%	28%	81%	19%
Unsuccessful outcomes; closed after services	159	89%	11%	95%	5%	92%	8%	80%	20%	86%	14%
Supported employment individuals	329	96%	4%	99%	1%	97%	3%	94%	6%	95%	5%
Individuals under 25 at application	440	95%	5%	98%	2%	96%	4%	90%	10%	93%	7%
Individuals with autism	143	96%	4%	100%	0%	98%	2%	95%	5%	95%	5%
Individuals with deafness/hearing loss	181	99%	1%	99%	1%	93%	7%	97%	3%	96%	4%
Individuals with mental health disabilities	449	96%	4%	98%	2%	95%	5%	91%	9%	93%	7%
Individuals with physical disabilities	258	98%	2%	99%	1%	96%	4%	94%	6%	96%	4%
Individuals with traumatic brain injury	28	100%	0%	100%	0%	96%	4%	96%	4%	93%	7%
Individuals with other disabilities	231	98%	2%	99%	1%	94%	6%	92%	8%	95%	5%

PROGRAM DATA

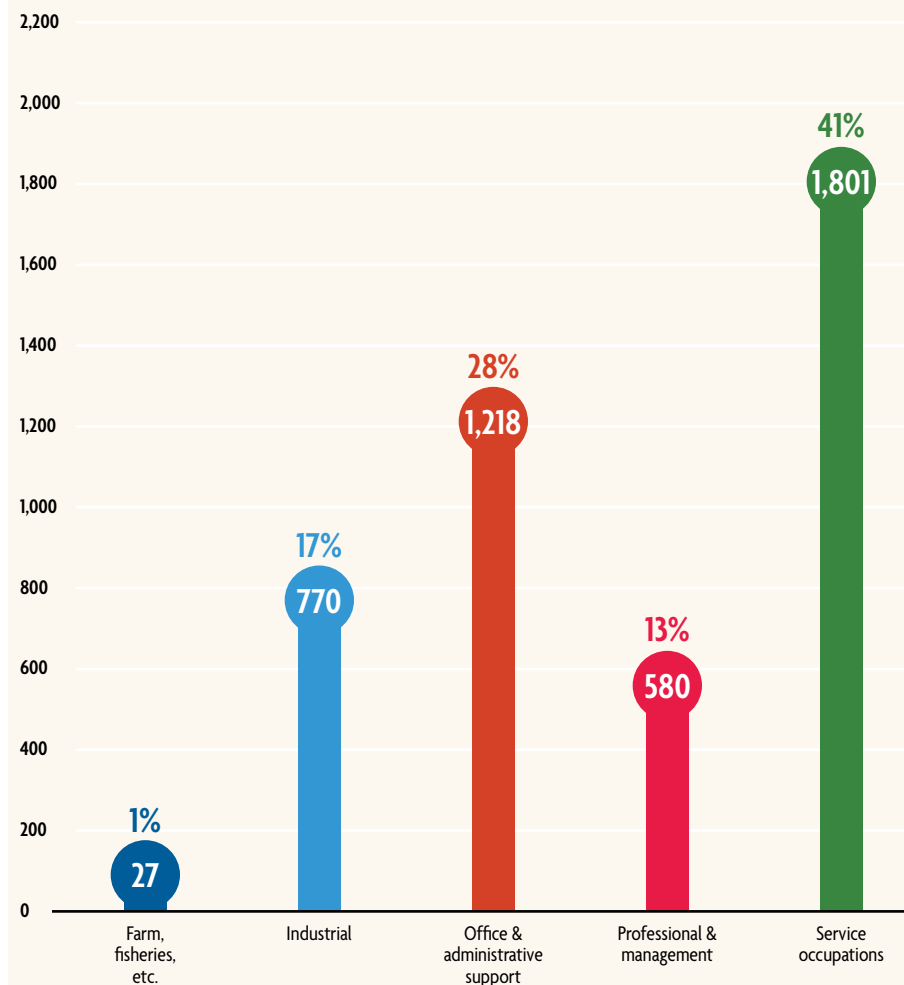
DISABILITY CATEGORIES

4,396 Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2019



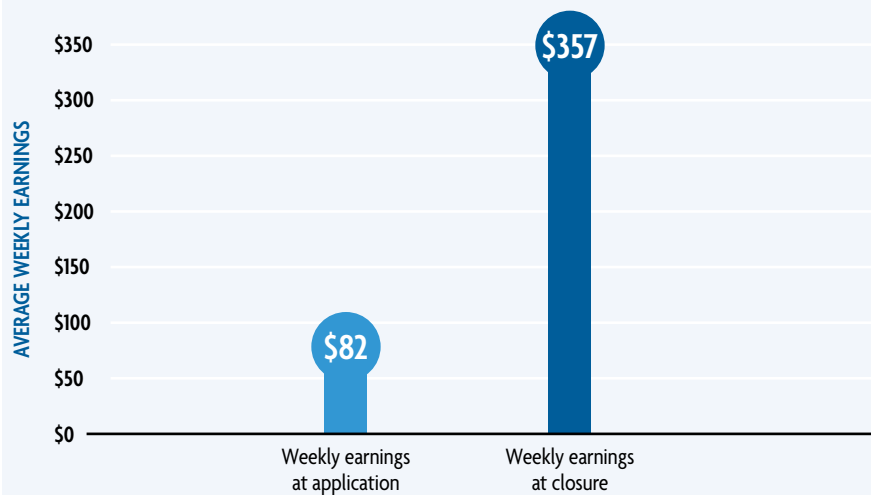
OCCUPATIONS

4,396 Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2019



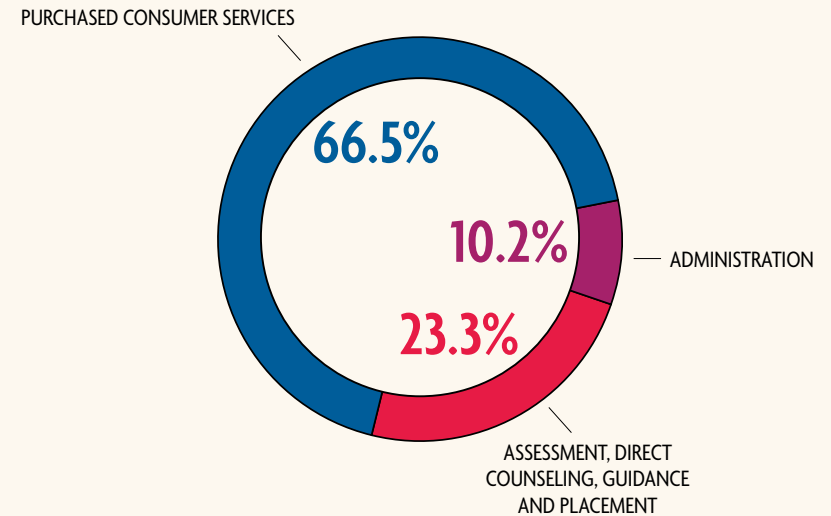
PROGRAM DATA

IMPACT OF VR SERVICES: PY 2019



With an increase in average weekly earnings of \$275 for 4,396 individuals with successful outcomes, the total annual increase in income amounted to \$62,862,800.

EXPENDITURES: PY 2019



GENDER

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2019

GENDER	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Male	2,447	55%
Female	1,938	44%
Did not wish to self-identify	11	1%
TOTAL	4,396	100%

ETHNICITY

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2019

ETHNICITY	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
White	3,309	75%
African-American	874	20%
Hispanic	104	3%
American Indian	59	1%
Asian	41	<1%
Pacific Islander	9	<1%
TOTAL	4,396	100%

AGE

Individuals With Successful Employment Outcomes: PY 2019

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Less than 25	1,551	35%
25-34	841	19%
35-44	642	15%
45-54	580	13%
55-64	548	13%
65 and over	234	5%
TOTAL	4,396	100%

OFFICES

1) CAPE GIRARDEAU VR

3102 Blattner Drive, Suite 103
Cape Girardeau, MO 63703
Toll-free: 877-702-9883

2) CENTRAL OFFICE VR

3024 Dupont Circle
Jefferson City, MO 65109
Toll-free: 877-222-8963

3) CHILLICOTHE VR

603 W. Mohawk Road
Chillicothe, MO 64601
Toll-free: 866-572-4049

4) COLUMBIA VR

900 W. Nifong Blvd., Suite 210
Columbia, MO 65203
Toll-free: 877-222-8961

5) FARMINGTON VR

901 Progress Drive, Suite 100
Farmington, MO 63640
Toll-free: 800-640-7110

6) HANNIBAL VR

112 Jaycee Drive
Hannibal, MO 63401
Toll-free: 877-222-8960

7) JEFFERSON CITY VR

1500 Southridge Drive, Suite 200
Jefferson City, MO 65109
Toll-free: 866-661-9106

8) JOPLIN VR

801 E. 15th St., Suite B
Joplin, MO 64804
Toll-free: 877-222-8964

9) KANSAS CITY DOWNTOWN VR

615 E. 13th St., Room G-3
Kansas City, MO 64106
Toll-free: 866-971-8568

10) KANSAS CITY EAST/ TRANSITION VR

Joseph P. Teasdale State Office Building
8800 E. 63rd St., Suite 260
Raytown, MO 64133
Toll-free: 866-831-1363

11) KANSAS CITY NORTH VR

8030 N. Oak Trafficway
Kansas City, MO 64118
Toll-free: 877-270-0198

12) KIRKSVILLE VR

1612 N. Osteopathy, Suite B
Kirksville, MO 63501
Toll-free: 877-222-8962

13) NEVADA VR

621 E. Highland Ave., Suite 2
Nevada, MO 64772
Toll-free: 800-598-3471

14) POPLAR BLUFF VR

1903 Northwood Drive, Suite 3
Poplar Bluff, MO 63901
Toll-free: 800-281-9894

15) ROLLA VR

1101A Kingshighway
Rolla, MO 65401
Toll-free: 800-890-2867

16) SEDALIA VR

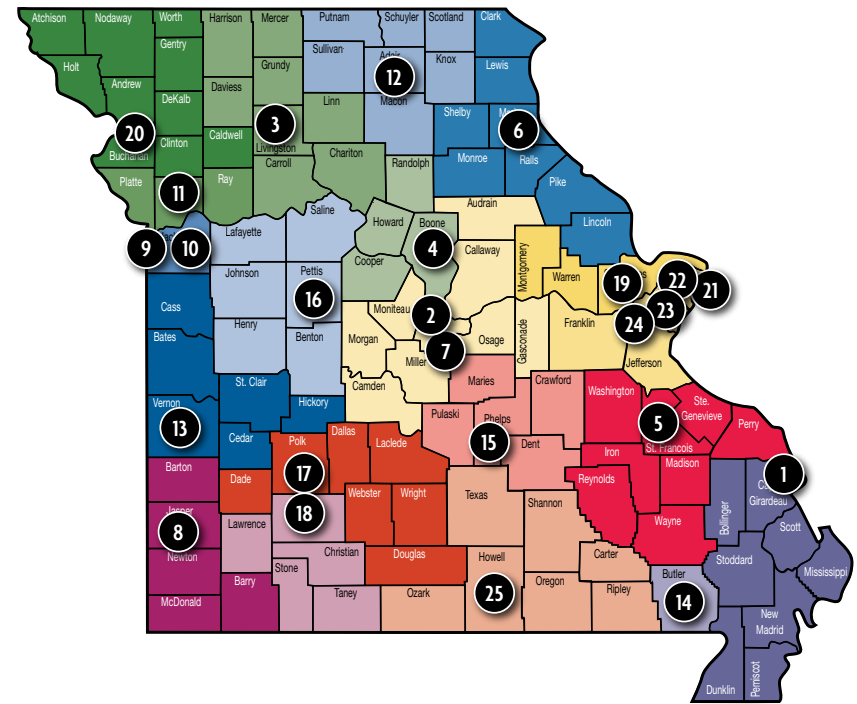
2115 W. Broadway Blvd.
Sedalia, MO 65301
Toll-free: 844-487-0495

17) SPRINGFIELD NORTH VR

613 E. Kearney St.
Springfield, MO 65803
Toll-free: 877-222-8965

18) SPRINGFIELD SOUTH VR

1735 W. Catalpa St., Suite C
Springfield, MO 65807
Toll-free: 877-222-8967



19) ST. CHARLES VR

3737 Harry S. Truman Blvd., Suite 400
St. Charles, MO 63301
Toll-free: 855-283-2681

20) ST. JOSEPH VR

State Office Building
525 Jules St., Room 201
St. Joseph, MO 64501
Toll-free: 877-702-9876

21) ST. LOUIS DOWNTOWN VR

220 S. Jefferson Ave., Suite 110
St. Louis, MO 63103
Toll-free: 866-971-8569

22) ST. LOUIS NORTH VR

4040 Seven Hills Drive, Suite 257
Florissant, MO 63033
Phone: 314-475-7999

23) ST. LOUIS SOUTH VR

St. Louis South Service Center
7545 S. Lindbergh Blvd., Suite 100
St. Louis, MO 63125
Toll-free: 877-222-8968

24) ST. LOUIS WEST/TRANSITION VR

9900 Page Ave., Suite 104
St. Louis, MO 63132
Phone: 314-587-4877

25) WEST PLAINS VR

3417 Division Drive, Suite 2
West Plains, MO 65775
Toll-free: 877-222-8959

VR100: A CENTURY OF SUCCESS



1920

Smith-Fess Act/Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act

President Woodrow Wilson signs the Smith-Fess Act, also known as the Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act, establishing a public VR program for civilians funded on a matching basis with the states. It is modeled on earlier legislation providing VR services to disabled veterans, the Smith-Sears Rehabilitation Act of 1918, and only serves people with physical disabilities.

1973

Rehabilitation Act

The Rehabilitation Act replaces the VR Act, bringing sweeping changes to the VR program, including prioritizing serving people with the most significant disabilities and emphasizing evaluation and research as well as staff training. It also requires greater consumer involvement in the planning process and funds demonstration grants for independent living centers. Title V of the Act advances civil rights for people with disabilities, including in employment by federal agencies, federal contractors and recipients of federal funds, as well as in the provision of federally funded programs and activities.

1935

Social Security Act

In recognition of the program's economic benefit to individuals and the nation, the Social Security Act provides permanent federal funding for VR, with annual increases in appropriations.

1990

ADA Signing

The passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) advances civil rights for people with disabilities, including in the workplace. Congress also reauthorizes the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, originally passed in 1975, and renames it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Together, the ADA, Rehabilitation Act and IDEA represent the world's most comprehensive civil rights protections for people with disabilities, addressing inclusion across all sectors of society.

1940

States VR Council

The States Vocational Rehabilitation Council — a forerunner of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) — is formed within the National Rehabilitation Association to advise regarding the formulation of federal policies and standards affecting the states.

1998

Workforce Investment Act

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) amends the Rehabilitation Act and increases collaboration between VR and other federal employment and training programs. This means VR consumers are to be served by a variety of programs, with increased coordination across systems to improve efficiency and outcomes. As part of this, WIA mandates equal access to all state and local workforce services for individuals with disabilities.

1943

Barden-LaFollette Act

The Barden-LaFollette Act makes significant changes to the VR program, expanding the nature of services that can be provided, extending eligibility to people with intellectual and mental health disabilities, and creating separate agencies to serve people who are blind. It also introduces a new funding scheme, requires states to submit written plans and changes the name of the legislation to the "Vocational Rehabilitation Act."

2014

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) amends the Rehabilitation Act and affirms VR's role as a core component of the nation's public workforce system, strengthening the goal of equal partnership and providing equal access to customers across programs and services. It includes a specific focus on improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities, with a special emphasis on providing pre-employment transition services for youth. It also emphasizes VR's role in serving businesses to meet their workforce needs.

Note: The year 2020 marked the 100th anniversary of vocational rehabilitation services in America. This abridged version of "**Vocational Rehabilitation: 100 Years of Investing in America — A Historical Timeline**" is reproduced with the permission of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. To view the full interactive timeline, please visit [www.vr100.org](#).



DECEMBER 2020

Published by Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
3024 Dupont Circle, Jefferson City, MO 65109
Website:

To request this report in an alternate format,
call **573-751-3251** or toll-free **877-222-8963**.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, or any other basis prohibited by statute in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Director of Civil Rights Compliance and MOA Coordinator (Title VI/Title IX/504/ADA/ADAAA/Age Act/GINA/USDA Title VI), 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; email civilrights@dese.mo.gov. Anyone who requires auxiliary aids or services in connection with vocational rehabilitation services should contact Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation at 573-751-3251 or through Relay Missouri at TTY 800-735-2966, VOICE 866-735-2460 or dial 711.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is funded, in part, with a federal grant awarded by the Department of Education. In FFY 2020, the program received \$63,511,322 of federal funds and \$17,189,214 of state funds for VR services. Total funding of \$80,700,536 was comprised of 78.7% federal monies and 21.3% of state matching funds. The Supported Employment (SE) program is funded, in part, with a federal grant awarded by the Department of Education. In FFY 2020, the program received \$271,230 of federal funds and \$14,275 of state funds for SE services. Total funding of \$285,505 was comprised of 95% federal monies and 5% state matching funds. The Independent Living (IL) program is funded, in part, with a federal grant awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services. In FFY 2020, the program received \$338,717 of federal funds and \$37,635 of state funds for IL services. Total funding of \$376,352 was comprised of 90% federal monies and 10% state matching funds. In FFY 2020, the IL program received additional state funding for an overall total of \$5,153,103.